Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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COMMUNITY Briefs

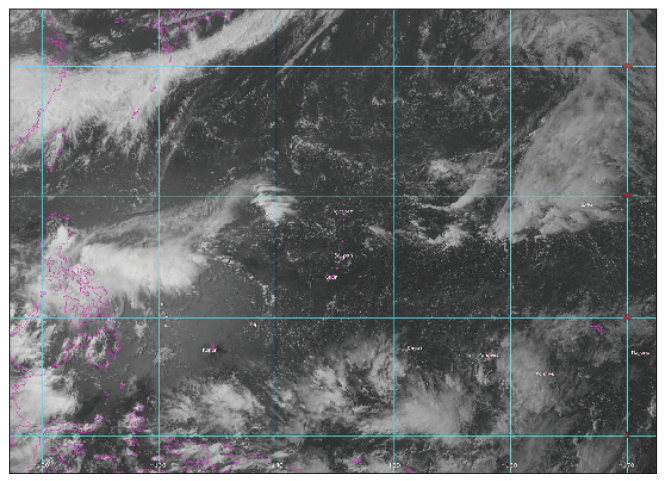
FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF SEPT 16, 2004

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
[redacted]	[redacted]

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

[redacted]

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 AM., JUNE 1, 2004
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Low-level convergent wind flow is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms 90 miles either side of a line from 14n130e to 16n133e and south of Palau between 5n and the equator from 131e to 139e. A surface trough of low pressure stretching from 1n146e to 7n149eis generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms just south of Chuuk between 7n and the equator from 142e to 157e. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers near Pohnpei and Kosrae between 8n and 1n from 158e to 165e and across portions of the Marshall Islands 60 miles either side of a line from 9n174e to 7n167e. An upper-level low centered near 26n160e is generating scattered showers near Wake Island within 150 miles either side of a line from 25n166e to 20n165e to 18n156e.

SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Light and variable winds. Highs near 87. Lows near 77.

GUAM AND ROTA
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Light and variable winds. Highs near 87. Lows near 77.

PALAU
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Variable at less than 10 kt.

POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Variable at less than 10 kt.

KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.

CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.

MAJURO
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	60F (16C)	46F (8C)
Beijing	Sunny	91F (33C)	64F (18C)
Hong Kong	Thunder	90F (32C)	79F (26C)
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	87F (31C)	72F (22C)
London, England	Showers	66F (19C)	51F (11C)
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	80F (27C)	62F (17C)
Manila	Thunder	93F (34C)	82F (28C)
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	58F (14C)	42F (6C)
Miami	Sunny	91F (33C)	76F (24C)
New York City	Rain	70F (21C)	60F (16C)
Osaka	Sunny	70F (21C)	55F (13C)
Paris	Showers	65F (18C)	49F (9C)
Pusan	Sunny	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
Rome	Cloudy	68F (20C)	51F (11C)
Salem, Oregon	Sunny	74F (23C)	50F (10C)
San Francisco	Sunny	67F (19C)	53F (12C)
Seoul	Sunny	81F (27C)	60F (16C)
Tokyo, Japan	Rain	68F (20C)	60F (16C)
Washington, DC	Thunder	84F (29C)	64F (18C)

dial rent

Students could win a $10,000 US savings bond

Commander John Davis of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Saipan Post 3457 announced the kick-off of this year's VFW "Patriots Pen Essay Competition."

Students in grades 6-8 from the Commonwealth have the opportunity to compete in the annual essay competition and win thousands of dollars in U.S. savings bonds and a trip to the VFW National Convention.

Students begin by competing at the Post level. Post winners advance to District where they will compete with contestants from Guam. District winners then compete at the Department, which is the Pacific Areas. The Department winner will compete for more than $66,000 in U.S. Savings Bonds and an all-expense paid trip to join other national dignitaries attending the VFW National Convention.

Students are invited to write a 300-400 word essay on a patriotic theme. This year's theme is "What Service to Our Country Means to Me." The deadline date for student entry is Nov. 1, 2004.

Interested students and teachers should contact the Patriot's Pen Chair at Post 3457 by phone 235-4839 or fax 235-4830 or contact Davis at 235-5123.

American Samoa wants in on boundary talks

APIA, Samoa (Samoa Observer/PIR)—The American Samoa Department of Maritime is mindful of Samoa's intentions to discuss the ocean boundaries between the two Samoas. But though the matter is to be discussed between Washington and Apia, American Samoa Maritime Director Ufagafa Ray Tulafono says there should be some input from his office.

"It's true that the [United States] State Department presides over all matters concerning American territorial boundaries," he said. "But to be fair, Washington does not understand what the situation is here. I would anticipate substantial input from either the American Samoa government or the office of maritime during these discussions."

The main concern at the moment, he said, is the existence of two boundaries between the two Samoas. They are the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone and the recent boundary mapped by the regional South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission, he said.

Though the two boundaries are similar between the main islands of Upolu and Tutuila, he said, it shifts eastward some 40 miles north near Swains Island.

Ufagafa said that some fishing boats from Apia have been detained in this area.

"But they contend that under the SOPAC arrangement they were fishing in Samoan waters," he said.

Another issue involves catches.

Ufagafa said that as fishing continues to gain economic precedence, the need to define ocean borders gains more importance.

"This is, of course, for the best interests of both Samoas," he said. "The concern here not only involves the albacore-type fish but also the by-catches or whatever else that is caught in these waters."

The issue is expedited, he said, by the fact that American Samoa is now a member of the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council.

"And the agreement limits the number of fishing boats operating in American Samoan waters," he said.

Ufagafa said this issue should be thoroughly discussed during the proposed inter-Samoa talks between Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi and Governor Togiola Tulafono.

"Fundamental during these discussions, I believe, is the fact that we may be politically separate but we are all Samoans regardless."

Incentives offered to Japanese vacationers

The Japan Travel Bureau, which books most of outbound Japanese vacation travel, has rolled out two trial travel discount campaigns to stimulate overseas travel in September and October, according to a report quoted by the Pacific Business News.

According to it, the Travel Journal International reports that JTB has launched the "Ladies Discount," available only this month, which offers a 5,000-yen discount to females traveling in groups of two or more. This discount is offered on tour packages to Guam and Saipan.

The "Birthday Discount" campaign, slated for this month and next, applies to travelers age 20 or older, with birthdays falling within the month of departure, and may include up to three other traveling companions. The program offers a 5,000-yen ($45) discount per person for trips to Hawaii and Bali.

Pacific Business News said JTB had indicated that it may extend the campaigns, depending on the results of the programs.

Palau prepares for presidential primary

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—The race for Palau's presidency begins with the island nation's primary election Sept. 28, which will determine which two of the three candidates will be on the General Election ballot on Nov. 2.

Incumbent President Tommy Remengesau, and challengers Ben Roberto and Polycarp Basilius are vying for the opportunity to lead the small island nation.

In the past four years, Remengesau has sought to preserve Palau's environment while he encouraged economic growth.

Basilius is one of Palau's richest businessmen and has been involved with the young nation's tumultuous political scene for many years.

Ben Roberto has been an active member of Palau's government and has served as the governor of Angaur state.

According to the Palau Consulate office, there are about 1,200 Palauan citizens on Guam who are registered to vote in Palau's elections via absentee voting.

Absentee ballots must be postmarked by Sept. 28 to be valid, said Jeff Kenty of the Palau Consulate on Guam.

Guam's Palauan voters make up about 10 percent of Palau's total voter numbers.

The Palau Election Commission has 12,922 Palauan voters registered and that number is expected to increase, as all of the requests for absentee ballots have not been included.

Palauans on Guam who are registered to vote should have received their ballots already, Kenty said.

Kenty said Palauan voters need to bring their absentee ballots to the consulate office located at the ITC Building in Tamuning for certification.

"All they need to do is fill in (the) ballot, then bring it down to the consulate office so we can certify it, then (voters) can mail it to the Palau Election Commission," Kenty said.

According to a press release from the Palau Consulate Office, special accommodations are available to Palauans who need help getting their ballots certified or sending them to Palau.

Business

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Millions lost in cyberspace

Tucked into the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was a little-known program called the "e-rate," setting up a tax that has cost consumers and phone companies upward of $2 billion a year. What has that money bought? A rudderless program riddled with fraud and waste.

The e-rate tax is aimed at providing schools and libraries with Internet access. The program, championed by Al Gore when he was vice president, was supposed to help schools allow low-income students to close the "digital divide" and gain new social and economic opportunities. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) began raising questions about it during a hearing on the program six years ago. Since then, its problems have become more apparent. The e-rate fund has distributed $12 billion over six years, and estimates place the amount wasted in the billions. Because of lack of oversight, it's impossible to know the extent of the losses.

During a recent House hearing, legislators documented some of the lapses. They showed, for instance, how most of the $101 million in e-rate funds spent in Puerto Rico went to dubious purchases, such as 73,000 wireless connection cards for individual computers. The cards, purchased at more than $300 apiece five years ago, have grown obsolete in a warehouse outside San Juan. Most Puerto Rican children still access the Internet through dial-up modems on roughly two computers per school.

Other rural projects cited by supporters as successes have enormous per-pupil costs. A conflict of interest is built into the program's core: Its dollars are doled out by a nonprofit corporation run by telecommunications service providers whose businesses benefit from the money. They are barely overseen by the Federal Communications Commission.

Legislators are planning more hearings after the Fourth of July recess, and the e-rate program will come up for congressional reauthorization next year. Its overall success or failure has never even been measured. Unless the schools and libraries that want it renewed can help make the program accountable, there's not much point in continuing it.

The FCC should take over from the board and put e-rate on probation. Grant applicants should have to submit plans that use proven technologies in cost-effective ways. Surfing the Internet isn't enough.

Los Angeles Times

How to rescue sick foreign states

By SEBASTIAN MALLABY
The Washington Post

Half a decade ago, in the wake of the emerging-market crisis that spread from East Asia to Russia to Brazil, the policy circuit buzzed with proposals to reform international finance. Bright ideas were mooted—by think tanks, market sages and a high-profile congressional commission—and in 2001 the incoming Bush team declared itself "impatient" with the status quo it had inherited. But the upshot of this brainstorming was modest, incremental change. The grand reformist talk only weakened confidence in the existing system while doing little to improve it.

Today we have a new version of this phenomenon. The big buzz right now surrounds post-conflict reconstruction: Both Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that we aren't good at it. At least three bits of legislation on this topic are floating around Congress; the State Department is mulling schemes to strengthen its response; the Pentagon promises to train African peacekeepers. The Center for Global Development recently produced a report on conflict and failed states, and the Council on Foreign Relations has a high-level task force examining the same challenge.

Some of the new thinking is quite radical. The report from the Center for Global Development, for example, advocates a cabinet-level department in the U.S. government to handle strategy toward developing countries. It calls for an initiative to anticipate civil wars so that preventive action can displace expensive remedial efforts; the British government is implementing a version of this policy. Others advocate a new reconstruction trust fund, which would get around the need to pass the hat when a crisis demands urgent intervention.

Much of this sounds good, and I've done my bit in the past to press versions of this agenda. But it's hard to escape the feeling that we're reliving the debate over emerging markets, when ambitious ideas—an international bankruptcy court, an early-warning system for crises, an expanded International Monetary Fund that could act as a global lender of last resort—briefly lit the sky and then rapidly fizzled.

Some of the current post-conflict proposals should be ruled out on grounds of political implausibility. After the bureaucratic teething problems of the Department of Homeland Security, is it realistic to propose another cabinet-level agency? Given the trouble of raising money for existing international programs—the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, for example, seems likely to get a fraction of the money it is asking for in this year's appeal—what is the likelihood that a post-conflict trust fund would attract serious cash from donors? Would the French or German government donate money to such a fund, knowing that the money might be spent on a future crisis that it deemed unworthy, such as cleaning up after the Bush administration in Iraq? Unlikely.

Other proposals are politically easy but practically unhelpful. Early-warning, for example, sounds good, and it's not hard to create a new unit in the State Department to monitor leading indicators of conflict. But civil conflicts, like financial crises, are hard to predict with any certainty, and in any case the private sector is already trying. In the financial world, you can consult a credit-rating agency or an investment bank. In the political world, you can read the excellent reports from the International Crisis Group.

Moreover, suppose you identify a list of 20 tense countries where civil war looks likely. What do you do about it? The central finding in development theory in the past decade is that you probably could not do anything. Foreign aid does not work in dysfunctional countries, where the threat of conflict looms; it works only in countries that are well run, which is why the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account will funnel cash to a short list of nations that are poor yet governed competently. If the talk of "conflict prevention" gets too much traction, this virtuous selectivity may be undone. Aid will be diverted to corrupt, autocratic environments that seem headed for civil war. It will probably be wasted.

Rather than reaching for a radical new fix, the best approach to the problem of failed states is to nurture the institutions that we have already. You want a post-conflict trust fund? Well, you already have the World Bank, whose subsidized loans can be used to reconstruct countries—why not just expand it? You want an institution that can parachute into a broken country and rebuild everything from the judicial system to the electricity grid to the central bank? Well, the World Bank can do that too, and did in Bosnia—again, why not give it more resources? You want an institution that can mobilize peacekeepers and train new indigenous armies? You already have the United Nations and NATO, so why not bolster them before you dream up a third option?

Above all, don't lose sight of past experience. Exactly 60 years ago, at the Bretton Woods conference in July 1944, the United States and its allies created the World Bank, believing (as Franklin Roosevelt told the delegates) that poverty and hopelessness threatened the world's stability. Six decades later, we've learned some lessons about what works and what doesn't in failed and failing states. Ignoring that history will condemn us to relive it.

Blind rush toward AIDS therapy may prove disastrous

By SALLY SATEL
Special to the Los Angeles Times

The World Health Organization is racing to get medication to millions of people infected with HIV/AIDS. The organization's "3 by 5 plan"—which aims to treat 3 million people, mostly Africans, by the end of 2005—is an ambitious one. But maybe WHO should slow down before it causes harm to those it seeks to aid.

A red flag went up last month when WHO announced that two medications on its list of approved HIV drugs did not meet quality standards. The drugs were antiretrovirals made by Cipla, an Indian manufacturer whose major business is copying pharmaceuticals invented and patented by other companies, mainly in the United States.

The problem? The raw data from tests conducted by an independent company (hired by Cipla) to evaluate two of Cipla's HIV drugs—drugs that WHO endorsed—failed to prove that those drugs would deliver as much medication to a person's system as the gold-standard patented form of the pills.

In the case of HIV/AIDS medications, low concentrations in blood and tissues make it harder to keep the virus from multiplying and creating mutant forms, some of which will no longer respond to medication. When these mutated forms multiply within an individual or are transmitted to another person, resistant strains spread and the disease becomes harder to contain.

Since the two Cipla-made drugs were approved by WHO in 2002 and 2003, thousands of Africans have taken them. The longer patients are exposed to inadequate doses, the greater the chance for drug-resistant HIV strains to develop.

To what extent has this already happened? Who will contact these individuals and tell them to discontinue the medications? And what medications will they take in place of these drugs?

How WHO will handle this problem is not the only question the organization faces. Some global health experts also worry that it is promoting a questionable treatment in the form of a pill called Triomune, also made by Cipla, as its first-line medication in the "3 by 5" initiative.

Triomune contains three standard HIV drug compounds (lamivudine, stavudine and nevirapine), each at a fixed dose and combined together in one pill. WHO officials say a combination pill is easier to distribute and more convenient for users. Many Western HIV/AIDS patients take up to 20 pills over the course of the day, so ease of administration is no small matter.

But there are potential problems. WHO does not test drugs, and Triomune has not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration because Cipla has not submitted it. This is especially puzzling in light of the FDA's recently announced intention to expedite approval of fixed-dose antiretrovirals made by foreign drug companies.

Many health experts are rightly skeptical of a one-size-fits-all approach to a complex disease that doctors in the West routinely treat with a flexible armament of drugs, adjusted to each patient according to that individual's needs.

Specific drugs are switched often or their dosage strengths adjusted depending on side effects, progress of the disease and other medical problems the patient suffers.

A doctor's freedom to custom-tailor a cocktail is essential so that the resulting medicine does not interact badly with other drugs or exacerbate a particular medical condition also suffered.

In rural Africa, where sophisticated medical care is lacking, a calculable percentage of patients will become very sick or even die from the nevirapine component of this three-in-one drug. Thus the dilemma: the need to balance drug-related deaths and illness from using Triomune against the numbers of people who would go untreated altogether if aid agencies adopted a flexible but more expensive strategy.

As attention turns to the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, next month, WHO must regain the world's confidence and not foist unproven drug therapies on the world's poor and sick.

Satel, a physician, is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

NATO's 'myth' in Afghanistan

By JACKSON DIEHL
The Washington Post

A couple of years ago, when the Bush administration's unilateralists were still riding high, a senior official at the Pentagon told me the mocking slogan for the trans-Atlantic alliance then circulating around his building went as follows: "NATO—keep the myth alive!" No doubt he never imagined that in the run-up to the 2004 election, his boss would be trying to do just that—only without the sarcasm.

"I don't know when in the history of the alliance we've seen so many successes," a newly enthusiastic Donald Rumsfeld told the press traveling with him last week to the NATO summit in Istanbul. He and other administration officials extolled NATO's decision to help train Iraqi security forces and its commitment of more troops to Afghanistan. They echoed President Bush's claim that the feuding about Iraq that nearly destroyed the alliance last year was over. "We got everything we wanted," one White House official said.

Such rhetoric is a logical response to John Kerry's tactic of making Bush's mismanagement of NATO, and its consequences in Iraq, a central part of his argument to voters. It is even partly true—at least in the sense that the Bush administration is now eager to work with the allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, in contrast to the stiff-arm Rumsfeld delivered to the Europeans hoping to join the first offensive against the Taliban in the fall of 2001.

The sad part is that, behind all the spin, the old Pentagon gibe is looking more and more apt. Having expanded to include most of Central Europe, and resolved to address the threats of the 21st century, America's most important international partnership is on the brink of a crippling failure, one that would leave a President Kerry as well as a second-term Bush with little to work with.

The threat lies not in Iraq--where continued trans-Atlantic discord in fact makes a full-blown NATO operation impossible—but in Afghanistan, which NATO long ago adopted as a major ongoing mission. Last year the allies resolved to expand a modest peacekeeping force in Kabul to provincial centers around the country, an operation critical to bolstering the authority of the weak pro-Western government and making possible the national elections planned for this year.

Yet, after months and months of haggling, European governments were only barely able to commit at Istanbul to staffing three new provincial centers, each with a couple of hundred troops. The cup-rattling forced on Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer was humiliating: With 26 nations and 5 million men in arms to draw on, Scheffer struggled to obtain just three helicopters for the Afghan operation.

A desperate appeal for more help by Afghan President Hamid Karzai to the Istanbul summit essentially went unanswered. A promise was made to supply a couple of thousand more troops at the time of the elections, but no one knows where they will come from. At best, NATO will have 8,400 troops under its command in Afghanistan by the fall, or about a fifth of the number it dispatched to tiny Kosovo in 1999. The United States has some 14,000 troops in the country, but none are under NATO's command.

It now looks possible that the Afghan elections will be postponed because of lack of security. If so, NATO will get much of the blame—and the consequences for the alliance's cohesion may be dire. "Afghanistan is the litmus test for NATO's new mission," says a European ambassador in Washington. "If we fail in Afghanistan we might as well fold up and go home, because no one will take us seriously after that."

The mess points to the realities behind the happy talk from Istanbul. Though it now extols NATO rhetorically, the Pentagon's practical approach to it hasn't changed: No American troops have been pledged to the NATO Afghan mission, and proposals to bring the U.S. forces already there under NATO's umbrella have gone nowhere. European governments doubt that Bush's conversion to multilateralism is real—and consequently have little appetite for an operation that appears thankless as well as dangerous and expensive.

"The allies need more reassurance," the European ambassador told me. "We want to be assured that what we're now seeing is not multilateralism growing out of desperation—because desperate multilateralism is not effective multilateralism."

Yet, even if the Europeans were more enthusiastic, they might have little to contribute. Germany, the largest country in the European Union, has 270,000 soldiers in its army—yet its commanders maintain that no more than about 10,000 can be deployed at any one time. No matter the politics, the German Parliament is unlikely to authorize an increase in the current ceiling of 2,300 troops for Afghanistan. And Germany is the largest contributor to the NATO operation—France, which has never liked the idea of NATO operations outside of Europe, has only 800 soldiers there.

For now, Bush's interest lies in glossing over this trouble. Kerry's pitch is that he can make it go away with a new, alliance-centered foreign policy. Both are, in effect, counting on the myth's staying alive—at least until November.

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

Let's get on with our lives

I greatly appreciated Tina Sablan's letters to the editor (June 29th and April 7th) on gay rights. It was most unfortunate that in her words she "did not get a chance to speak, although I tried" at the hearing on Initiative 14-3, which aims to limit marriage to people of opposite sexes.

Sean Frink testified at the hearing that many young people are against House Speaker Fitial's Initiative 14-3 and, according to her June 29th letter, Ms. Sablan is one of them. It is unfortunate she didn't get a chance to speak.

Like Ms. Sablan, I was confused by Rep. Oscar Babauta's question at the hearing on what the law would do should Tom and Harry adopt an infant who would die without breast milk. Then he asked what if Mary and Jane adopted and had the same situation. I don't know why Mr. Babauta asked such questions, but whether a same sex-couple or heterosexual couple adopts, both would be in the same situation and require milk from an outside source. Examples of similarities between same-sex and heterosexual couples could go on and on. Both wanting life with the one they love. No difference.

Like Ms. Sablan, I was also confused by a woman's claim that people choose to be gay. This was the first time I have heard such. My many gay friends have all said they knew early on they felt attracted to one of their same sex. This, in spite of all their parents', peers' and society's expectations that they date and marry one of opposite sex. Initiative 14-3 is just one example! Why would anyone "choose" to be gay—often subject to ridicule and even persecution? Death under some governments.

I have heard so many stories of widespread infidelity in marriage, incest, children born outside wedlock and teen pregnancies in Saipan. These have been heterosexual, not homosexual related. My gay friends have been faithful to their partners, perhaps because they had to work so hard to be with the one they love. Again, just look at Initiative 14-3!

Let's attack problems like flagrant unfaithfulness in marriage, domestic violence, incest, children born outside wedlock, teen pregnancy, insufficient school textbooks, unemployment, lack of public transportation, and let people marry the one of their choice. Let them get on with their lives. And, everyone else should get on with theirs.

Millie Carroll
Capitol Hill

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Life & Style

Joni Mitchell's musical journey

By ROBERT HILBURN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

"I heard someone from the music business saying they are no longer looking for talent, they want people with a certain look and a willingness to cooperate," Joni Mitchell says, summarizing just about everything she feels is wrong with the pop world these days.

"I thought, that's interesting, because I believe a total unwillingness to cooperate is what is necessary to be an artist—not for perverse reasons, but to protect your vision. The considerations of a corporation, especially now, have nothing to do with art or music. That's why I spend my time now painting."

Mitchell is standing in the painting room of the Mediterranean-styled place in Los Angeles that has been her home for 30 years. Her face is aglow and her manner chatty as she points to the scores of paintings on the floor and walls. There are works, from portraits of Gauguin and Van Gogh to landscapes, to fit every mood—some tranquil, some tumultuous—and she seems as proud of them as the intimate, insightful songs from the '70s that made her a patron saint of romance for young women (and men) everywhere.

In such albums as "Blue," "Court and Spark," "For the Roses" and "Hejira," she wrote about matters of the heart with grace and unflinching detail, helping launch the confessional school of pop music. It was music fueled by pain—the pain of a young girl spending months in isolation because of polio and the pain of a young woman forced to give away her only child.

"I lost my daughter at 21. I had to give her up because I was broke, no place to take her, no money to take her," she says. "That was very traumatic. So my gift for music was born out of tragedy, really, and loss."

Yet despite the anguish beneath the songs, the music was never morbid. In fact, it was often jaunty, worldly, witty and, above all, honest. In a time of rising feminism, she never made romance into dogma. She's still trim and you can see in her eyes and cheekbones the features that caused her photo to be on thousands of dorm walls. The glow leaves her face, however, when asked if she plans to display or sell the paintings. She might show them in a museum at some point, but that's it.

"I don't want to get into merchandising them," she says sharply. "I want nothing to do with galleries, even in terms of exhibitions. When money meets up with art, there is a lot of pain, and it's the pain of ignorance, and I don't want to meet up with that ignorance again. My work is personal, too vulnerable. That's why I quit making records."

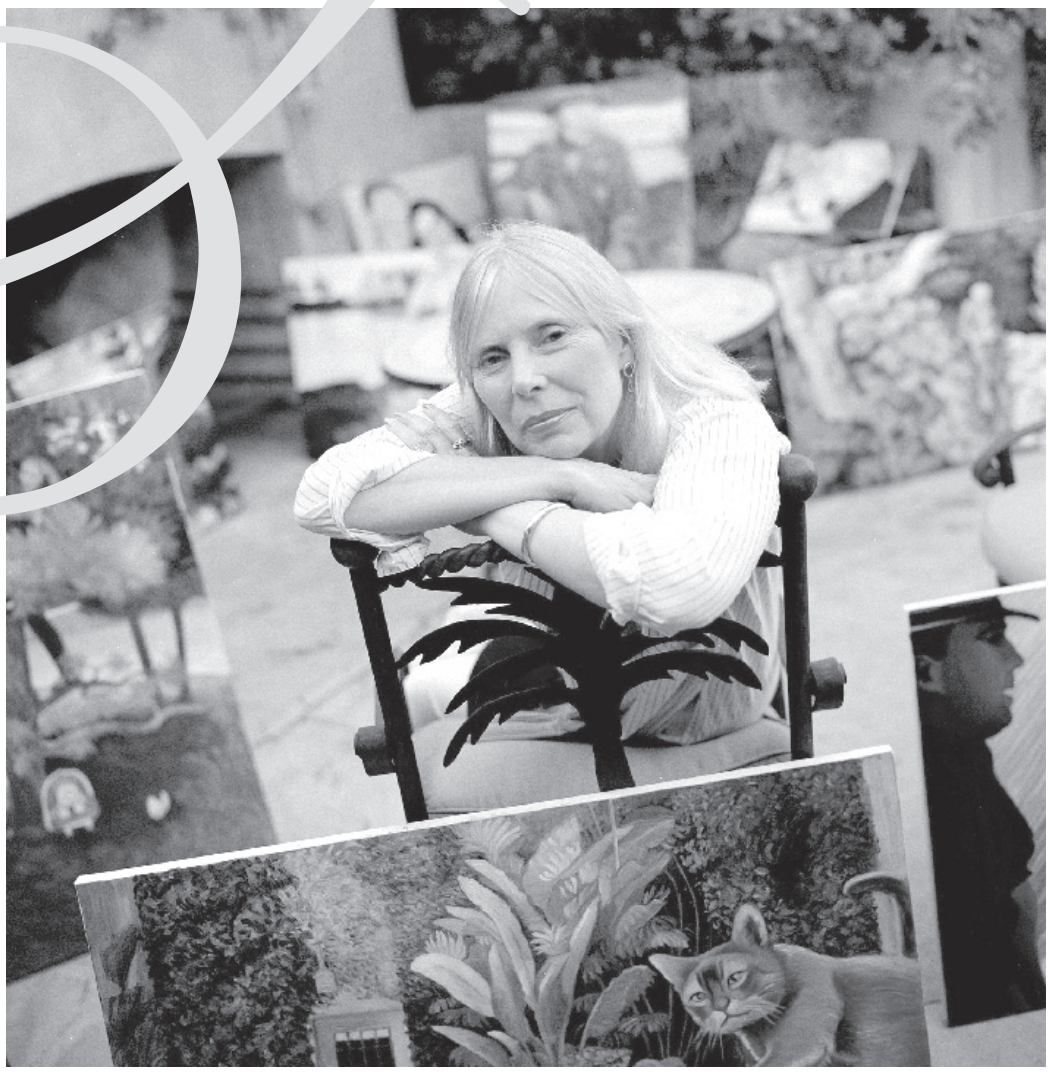
Although invariably labeled folk ("because I was a girl with blond hair and a guitar," she snaps), Mitchell traces her own influences to the classical music she adored as a youth and, later, jazz.

On this afternoon, she talks about how she developed her style, but the most essential quality of a songwriter, she suggests, may be mental toughness. Like Bob Dylan, and fellow Canadian Neil Young, Mitchell has fallen in and out of favor over the years. She has been revered, imitated—and ridiculed for being esoteric and out of touch.

Ultimately, she was not tough enough. "Everything in my later career, with few exceptions, has been compared unfavorably to my early work," she says matter-of-factly. "I've done 16 records hearing people say, 'You're not as good as you used to be. Finally, I said, 'OK, I agree with you.' "

Mitchell announced she was leaving the music business in 2002 and hasn't looked back. "My goal as a writer is more to comfort than to disturb," she says, explaining her decision. "Most of the art created in this particular culture is shallow and shocking, and I can't create music for this social climate."

> "That is part of the pursuit of happiness. You have to pull the weeds in your soul when you are young, when they are sprouting, otherwise they will choke you."



LOS ANGELES TIMES/GENARO MOLINA

Joni Mitchell wields a brush instead of a guitar today, but her singular vision and complex pride remain undimmed.

She pauses. In conversation, she is outspoken, funny, self-deprecating and stimulating. But she doesn't find anything funny about the topic at hand. "There's not much room for subtleties today. It's the shallow, flashy heart that grabs the attention; chase scenes, atrocities."

At 60, Joni Mitchell is a fascinating jumble of confidence, crankiness and vulnerability. She claims that the grossness of the business led to her retirement, but, hours later, you realize the real explanation is more complicated.

Mitchell is hard to corral on the subject of songwriting. She didn't start out to be a writer (painting was her first love) and never saw much mystery in it. She'd rather talk about psychology, Eastern culture, nature, politics, her grandchildren and painting. Nowadays, she gets so absorbed in her painting that she often spends all night in the studio, her Jack Russell dog or three cats her only companions.

Her two arts, painting and songwriting, happen in almost opposite ways for her. "In painting, you're brain empties out and there's not a word in it; it's like a deep meditation, like a trance," she says. "I could step on a tack and probably wouldn't know it when I'm painting. In writing, it's kind of the opposite. That's why some people take stimulants.

"You stir up chaotic thoughts, then you pluck from this overactive mind. It's part of my process as a writer, being emotionally disturbed by something exterior someone said or something that is happening in society. It's on your mind, and it won't go away until you deal with it."

Her fans may be shocked to hear how little she thinks of many of her most celebrated songs—songs that established her almost overnight as the first important female songwriter-performer in pop. Her style was greatly influenced by Dylan's emphasis on poetry, but she also wrote melodies as ambitious as Dylan's words. Drawing from classical composers and the great pre-World War II pop songwriters such as Gershwin, she came up with original and complex chord structures.

In "Both Sides Now," a hit for Judy Collins in 1968, the words and the music came together gloriously as she paints alternating pictures of the romantic cycle.

Even after all this time, she doesn't understand all the excitement over the song. "I thought 'Both Sides Now' was a failure, so what do I know?" she says, smiling. "I was not a good judge of my early material; none of it sounded all that good to me. That's why I wanted to keep moving forward."

Her early musical appreciation was tied more to the beauty and structure of classical music. The first singer who excited her was Edith Piaf, whose voice "thrilled my soul." She also speaks excitedly about hearing Rachmaninoff for the first time. At college, she studied commercial art, not music. But she sang folk music in clubs for fun and for pocket money. Everything changed when she got pregnant.

"Immediately my life was in shock," she says. Having a baby when unwed was the "worst thing you could do" at that time. So she told her mother she was quitting art college to become a musician.

She and the father, a fellow student, soon parted and Mitchell struggled to make a living singing in folk clubs in Canada. Hoping to provide a home for her baby, she says, she married American folk singer Chuck Mitchell, but the marriage was short-lived and she put the baby up for adoption. The move left her with a sadness and guilt that colored her songwriting.

Mitchell's debut album attracted some critical attention in 1968, but it was "Ladies of the Canyon" two years later that confirmed her artistry and "Blue" in 1971 that certified her greatness.

To understand the honesty and depth of emotion of "Blue," Mitchell says, you have to understand her frame of mind.

Part of the album's introspection and vulnerability grew out of her own conflict of carrying "this guilty secret of having a child out of wedlock" and "not having been able to bond with her" and the sudden "elevation of public attention." One song, "Little Green," was written as a message to her lost daughter.

But she also wanted to be truthful because she felt there was a danger in letting the public pick your persona for you—a trap that she felt both Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin fell into, contributing to their self-destructiveness.

"Jimi was a very genuine person, but doing all this theatrical stuff was humiliating to him," she says. "I didn't want a huge gulf between who I was offstage and who I was onstage. I didn't want to be a phony. Basically, what I thought at the time was: 'You are worshiping me. Let's see if you can worship me if you know who I really am.'"

The result was some of the most captivating music in American pop, songs with a diary-like intimacy and poetic grandeur, songs such as "A Case of You," which is blessed with a melody as bright and elastic as Mitchell's soprano voice. In today's world of pop exclamations, the album's gentle, almost understated feel seems all the more convincing and honest.

The music seemed almost effortless in its articulation of some of life's deepest and most complex emotions. "Blue" represented the point where passion meets art.

About the lack of accusation and retribution in the songs, she says, now warming to the subject: "I think men write very dishonestly about breakups. I wanted to be capable of being responsible for my own errors. If there was friction between me and another person, I wanted to be able to see my participation in it so I could see what could be changed and what could not.

"That is part of the pursuit of happiness. You have to pull the weeds in your soul when you are young, when they are sprouting, otherwise they will choke you."

Her next two albums, "For the Roses" in 1972 and "Court and Spark" in 1974, were equally embraced by critics and her fans. Mitchell, however, was far from satisfied. She yearned for more ambitious musical statements, ignoring complaints from old fans who sometimes found themselves alienated by the new works.

The move began raising eyebrows in the 1975 album "The Hissing of Summer Lawns" with its more challenging chord progressions and jazzier, free-form arrangements.

It was during the '70s transition period that Mitchell recorded "Hejira," another masterpiece. It's a demanding album whose restless alienation was captured brilliantly in "Amelia," which added

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'Star Wars' cast, crew demystify trilogy

LOS ANGELES (AP)—When it comes to "Star Wars," maybe there's too much gravity in space. Fans invariably take "Star Wars" too seriously, but the people behind the sci-fi series recall the experience as a surreal comic opera.

Training a monkey to play Yoda? Studio complaints that Chewbacca was pantsless? The only thing that worked on R2-D2 was the dwarf inside?

As the original trilogy heads to DVD for the first time Tuesday, the madcap tales told by those who lovingly toiled on "Star Wars," "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi" demystify three of the most revered sci-fi films of all time.

Not That Kind Of Movie:

Some films can be endlessly dissected and debated. But Luke Skywalker himself says "Star Wars" was just meant to be fun.

Twenty-seven years after the first movie debuted, actor Mark Hamill said he is amused by all the fact-checking fans do. One recent Web site shocked him.

"I think it was speculating on the administrative cost of the janitorial staff of the Death Star, taking this hard-edged reality to something that's fantasy," Hamill joked. "But I was that way myself. I remember saying things like, 'Well, wait a minute. I just got out of the trash compactor. How come my hair's all perfect?' And Harrison (Ford) would go, 'Hey kid ... it ain't that kind of movie.'"

Help Me Obi-Wan:

Some memories of "Star Wars" stick more than others—especially for the actors who had to do multiple shots of famous lines.

"I do remember permanently the hologram speech, because we had to reshoot it," Carrie Fisher, who played Princess Leia, wearily told fans at the recent Comic-Con festival in San Diego.

"Whenever I get lost on the way to someone's house, or I just forget your name, it's because I remember the speech. ... 'General Kenobi, years ago you served my father in the Clone Wars ...'" she said. "I'm a thousand years old and I still remember that thing. It's very disturbing. I have to take medication, and yet it still won't go away."

'Short' Circuit:

"Every day there were terrible problems that had to be solved," said 81-year-old Irvin Kershner, who is a real-life version of Obi-Wan Kenobi—the wise Jedi sage played by the late Alec Guinness.

Kershner, a film professor at the University of Southern California who was a mentor to "Star Wars" creator George Lucas, is the man Lucas asked to direct the sequel "The Empire Strikes Back," which is widely regarded as the best of the series.

"Before I went off to do the film, I had a talk with George," Kershner recalled. "He said, 'I want you to know something. They're going to prepare all these special devices for you but nothing is going to work ...' I thought he was kidding. From the third shot on, it was true. We had to improvise constantly."

For instance, Kernsher said he had eight R2-D2 robots, each of which could do a different task.

"But you know, they never did what you needed them to do. So we ended up pulling them with nylon cords instead of using the electronics because it would get stuck and go in little circles instead of going straight.

"The only thing that worked was when we would put a little dwarf inside one and he'd shake him to show that R2-D2 was nervous. That worked, the human factor!"

Overexposed Wookie:

The Chewbacca character was a goodhearted but fearsome Wookie, a species that was a combination of human, ape and canine. Peter Mayhew, a 7-foot-3 British actor, played the roaring "Chewy" in a thick furry suit that covered every inch from head to toe.

But studio executives in the 1970s worried that the character itself was indecent because all he wore was a strap of ammunition across his chest.

"I remember the memos from 20th Century Fox," Hamill said. "'Can you put a pair of lederhosen on the Wookie?' All they could think of was, 'This character has no pants on!' This went back and forth. They did sketches of him in culottes and baggy shorts."

In the midst of budget wrangling and the studios' efforts to get him to drop the word "Wars" from the title, Lucas also successfully fought to keep the Wookie au naturel.

Monkeying With Yoda:

"In the beginning, we didn't know what Yoda should look like," Kershner said. "One of the thoughts was that he'd be 9-feet tall with a huge mosaic beard and would look like Michelangelo's Moses, imposing. After all, he's 800-years-old and he knows everything and he has great powers. ... It seemed like a cliche."

Instead they decided to make Yoda very tiny and modest in nature. But how to do it?

"I asked that it could look like it ate, that it could climb," he said.

A puppet seemed ridiculous. No one had ever tried to pass one off as an actual living creature before, so Kershner looked for other solutions first.

"We thought, 'Maybe if we trained a monkey, in an outfit, and then animated the lips ...?'" Kershner said, his voice rising decades later over the old frustration. "You go crazy, and you try anything!"

Ultimately, the puppet proved to be the wiser choice.

"But there's never an expression change on Yoda," Kershner said. "You know that, right? You think there is, but it's body language. It's the eyes drooping, it's the ears going down. But it's the same face. Did you ever see Yoda smile? No."

Peculiar Merchandise:

"Star Wars" famously launched one of the most popular toy lines of all time.

However, the lumpy aliens in the "Star Wars" tavern and the many shuffling background robots were only background dressing before the action figures.

"Nine months after we filmed George looked at all the props being turned into toys and gave them names," Hamill said. "A lot of these things we'd call just, like, The Trash Can Robot. Now it's: 'No, no, no—that's IG-88.'"

Fisher said she liked being a doll, but found some of the Princess Leia merchandise slightly unnerving. "I always liked the shampoo bottle where you twist my head off and pour liquid out of my neck. That's very Freudian," she said. "If I dreamed that, what would you think it meant?"

Green Philosophy:

Kershner, who studies Buddhism as a hobby, said the "Star Wars" movies have a homespun wisdom, but that people shouldn't look too seriously to the Force to solve their problems.

"Yoda's philosophy was quite simplistic. 'If you get angry, you're gonna lose.' 'Don't try, do.' He has a basic philosophy that is very charming. Not very profound, although young people consider it profound. I wish they would read more."

Kershner credited Hamill with making Yoda seem more alive and smarter than he was, even though the actor couldn't hear Yoda's lines. "He's the one who made Yoda work," Kershner said. "He was acting to a mute puppet—pretty hard to do!"

Space Gravitas:

So it's OK to love "Star Wars," but the people who created the films have this advice for the die-hard galactic geeks: lighten up, have some fun.

Maybe Yoda isn't really a genius, maybe R2-D2 was kind of clunky ...

Hamill says maybe there shouldn't be too much nitpicking or overblown reverence.

As the Skywalker actor put it: "How can you be so serious on a film where you are dodging explosions and running away with Sir Alec Guinness on this side and an eight-foot monkey on this side, and the eight-foot monkey is the one flying the spaceship?"

appreciation message

JONI

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a rich layer of symphonic color to her storytelling.

"Hejira" was written while driving cross-country alone, Mitchell finding a parallel in her solitary mood with the doomed aviator Amelia Earhart. She considers it one of her most inspired works.

Her search for new musical textures reached a flashpoint four years later in "Mingus," a collaboration with celebrated jazz bassist Charles Mingus that many fans point to as when they lost interest in her music.

But she has no regrets. "We grew up in a very dissonant time, the Cold War, tension of impending disaster," she says of her drive for more complex sounds. Conventional pop chords seemed incapable of describing either her loss or the tension of living in a society with the bomb hanging over its head.

"Americans are simplistic musically," she says.

Mitchell enjoyed a critical and commercial resurgence in recent years. Her "Night Ride Home" album in 1991 especially was hailed by many as a return of the accessibility and warmth of her early albums. "Turbulent Indigo" in 1995 won a Grammy for best pop album and 2000's "Both Sides Now" won a Grammy for best traditional pop vocal album. Mitchell was also inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997.

There was obviously something more going on. Maybe it was just that she had finally moved beyond the old anguish, which had been her creative spark. Crucially, she was reunited with her daughter, Kilauren, in 1997 and found joy in the simple pleasures of being a grandmother of a boy, 11, and a girl, 5. Now, the family spends time with her in Los Angeles and she spends time near them in Canada. And no, the restless chronicler of romance, whose 12-year marriage to bassist Larry Klein ended in 1994, isn't in a relationship.

"I'm so happy," she says. "Such good friends. So much in love with life, but romantic love is over for me. I'm very happy about this leg of my life."

Yes, she confides, she still strums the guitar and noodles with new melodies, but no more lyrics for her. In the end, her personal contentment and her silence seem to be interlocked.

"In some ways, my gift for music and writing was born out of tragedy, really, and loss," she says softly. "When my daughter returned to me, the gift kind of went with it. The songwriting was almost like something I did while I was waiting for my daughter to come back."

Spears marries dancer in L.A. ceremony



AP

Britney Spears and dancer Kevin Federline grace the cover of the July 12, 2004, issue of People magazine.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Britney Spears, whose hits include "Oops! ... I Did It Again," has once again tied the knot, the second marriage in nine months for the multiplatinum artist.

Spears, 22, married her fiance, 26-year-old dancer Kevin Federline, in a secret weekend ceremony, her record label said Sunday. "She did marry him," Jive Records spokeswoman Sonia Muckle told The Associated Press.

Muckle declined to provide further details. On its Web site, "Entertainment Tonight" said Spears wore a white strapless dress for the wedding, held Saturday evening at a private home in the Studio City area with 20 to 30 people attending.

In January, Spears married childhood friend Jason Alexander in a surprise wedding in Las Vegas. That marriage was annulled 55 hours later.

Spears has gone from posing as a schoolgirl to sing "...Baby, One More Time" and saying sex should be saved for marriage to recording "I'm a Slave 4 U," kissing Madonna during the MTV Video Music Awards and posing nearly nude for magazine covers.

Spears' latest nuptials caught several of her fellow celebrities by surprise.

"Everybody is looking for happiness and love," comedian Ellen DeGeneres said while attending the Emmy Awards in Los Angeles. "She's very young. We got to give her a break."

Spears and Federline announced their engagement in June after dating since early this year.

Federline appeared in the movie "You Got Served" and performed as a backup dancer for singer Justin Timberlake, Spears' former boyfriend. He was previously involved with actress Shar Jackson of TV's "Moesha." They have two children—a 2-year-old and a newborn.

At the Emmys, Dennis Haysbert, who plays President Palmer on Fox's "24," joked, "I was just getting used to the other guy."

Kids getting flu vaccine may require two shots

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN



DEAR ABBY: Last year, you kindly published a letter from Dr. Deborah Wexler of the Immunization Action Coalition highlighting the importance of influenza immunization. Thanks in part to your efforts, record numbers of people were vaccinated early in the 2003-2004 season. Your letter could not have appeared at a better time, because the United States experienced an early flu season and children were severely impacted. By mid-December, 42 influenza-related deaths were reported in children under 18 years of age, half of them in children younger than 4.

Children between the ages of 6 months to 23 months remain especially vulnerable to complications from influenza infection. This year, the influenza vaccine is recommended for all children between 6 months and 23 months. Parents, household contacts and caregivers of children between those ages should also be vaccinated. These children, many of whom are receiving the vaccine for the first time, may require TWO shots for complete protection. To assure two shots can be given, parents should seek out the vaccine for their infants early.

We in the medical community want the public to be aware of these important new recommendations. Additionally, we want to make sure health-care professionals are aware. The influenza vaccine is extremely effective and can save lives.

MICHAEL FLEMING, M.D., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS; CARDEN JOHNSTON, M.D., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS; JOHN C. NELSON, M.D., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

DEAR DRS. FLEMING, JOHNSTON AND NELSON: I'm pleased to help you spread the word.

Readers, I am told that influenza kills more than 36,000 people every year, and together with pneumonia is the eighth leading cause of death. It's a tragedy that common myths surrounding the flu vaccine sometimes prevent people from getting it. These myths include the widely held mistaken belief that if you aren't vaccinated in September or October, it is too late to do it, and that only people over the age of 65 need it. Older citizens are not the only people who can benefit from flu shots; children and those who live and work closely with them can also benefit.

□ □ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: When I was in high school, I was sexually assaulted by my boyfriend of 18 months. It took me many years to forgive him. However, I don't think I ever forgave myself.

Now that I am in college, I can't bring myself to date. Every time I am asked out, I use any and all excuses I can come up with. It terrifies me that someone will betray my trust again. If a guy shows the slightest interest, I run away and cut off contact until he stops. I have never told anyone about what happened in high school because I thought they would blame me. Please help me—I'm so confused.

ASHAMED AND AFRAID IN COLORADO

DEAR ASHAMED AND AFRAID: I'm sad to say that rape is one of the most underreported crimes, and for the very reason that stopped you—the victim fears that she (or he) was somehow to blame. The victim is never to blame! The quickest way to start the healing process and move forward with your life would be to arrange to talk to a mental health professional at the student health center. Do not put it off. The time to deal with this is now, while help is close at hand. No one will blame you. Please trust me and make the call NOW.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Culkin charged with drug counts

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Prosecutors charged former child star Macaulay Culkin with two misdemeanor drug counts Monday in connection with a traffic stop where police found marijuana and prescription drugs.

Culkin, best known for his role in the "Home Alone" movies, was arrested Friday while traveling with a friend along Interstate 44 in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma County District Attorney Wes Lane said Culkin was charged with two counts of possession of a controlled dangerous substance. Lane said his office would insist that the actor receive drug treatment as part of any plea agreement.

No court date has been set.

Joel gets a star in Hollywood

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Billy Joel wrote the song, "Say Goodbye to Hollywood." On Monday, he joked he'd never leave. "It looks like I'm always going be here," Joel said after his sidewalk star was unveiled on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. "I have to tell you that I had not considered this when I wrote 'Say Goodbye to Hollywood.'"

Joel's plaque was placed on Hollywood Boulevard in front of the Pantages Theatre, where the Tony Award-winning musical based on his songs, "Movin' Out," is playing through Oct. 31.

Joel, 55, a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, lived in suburban Santa Monica early in his career. The pianist, singer and composer recalled walking along Hollywood Boulevard and "looking at all these names and not having a clue that I'd be here doing this."

Dangerfield in coma after heart surgery

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Rodney Dangerfield has been in a coma for a couple of weeks after undergoing heart surgery, but has begun to show some awareness, his wife said Monday.

The 82-year-old comedian was stable and had been breathing on his own for 24 hours, Joan Dangerfield said in a statement released by the comic's publicist, Kevin Sasaki.

Dangerfield had a heart valve replaced Aug. 25 at the University of California, Los Angeles, Medical Center.

There was no mention of a coma in a condition update from the publicist last week. Sasaki did not return calls for comment Monday.



Dangerfield

Joan Dangerfield said in her statement, "My husband slipped into a light coma a couple of weeks ago while recovering from his heart surgery. His overall condition, however, remains stable."

She said Dangerfield was receiving "extraordinary care" from his doctors and nurses.

"After recent visits from his family and close friends, Rodney is starting to show signs of awareness and we are all hopeful that he will regain full consciousness soon," she said. "Our family remains optimistic that Rodney will make a complete recovery and we are humbled by the love and support we have received during his hospitalization."

Kerry does 'Top Ten' on Letterman show

NEW YORK (AP)—Democrat John Kerry joked Monday on "The Late Show with David Letterman" about changes under President Bush's tax plan, including that Vice President Dick Cheney can claim the president as a dependent.

Besides reading his "Top 10" list, Kerry also poked fun at the tedious debate negotiations between the rival campaigns that ended in agreement Monday. Kerry said he wanted running mate John Edwards to stand in the vice presidential debate, but Cheney wanted to sit. "We compromised and now George Bush is going to sit on Dick Cheney's lap," he said.

Both Bush and Democratic rival Al Gore appeared on the CBS show in 2000. Bush has not appeared on any late-night comedy shows in this campaign. Kerry also has appeared on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" on NBC.

Kerry's "Top 10 Bush Tax Proposals" are:

10. No estate tax for families with at least two U.S. presidents.



AP

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass.,laughs along with talk show host David Letterman while presenting the "Top Ten list" during a taping of CBS's "The Late Show with David Letterman", Monday on the CBS Television Network.

9. W-2 Form is now Dubya-2 Form.

8. Under the simplified tax code, your refund check goes directly to Halliburton.

7. The reduced earned income tax credit is so unfair, it just makes me want to tear out my lustrous, finely groomed hair.

6. Attorney General (John) Ashcroft gets to write off the entire U.S. Constitution.

5. Texas Rangers can take a business loss for trading Sammy Sosa.

4. Eliminate all income taxes; just ask Teresa (Heinz Kerry) to cover the whole damn thing.

3. Cheney can claim Bush as a dependent.

2. Hundred-dollar penalty if you pronounce it "nuclear" instead of "nucular."

1. George W. Bush gets a deduction for mortgaging our entire future.

During Kerry's trip to New York, he also delivered a speech laying out his vision for Iraq and raised $4 million at reception and dinner benefiting the Democratic National Committee.

He planned another television appearance Tuesday morning—on "Live with Regis and Kelly."